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IN

Relation to the Natchez Hospital.

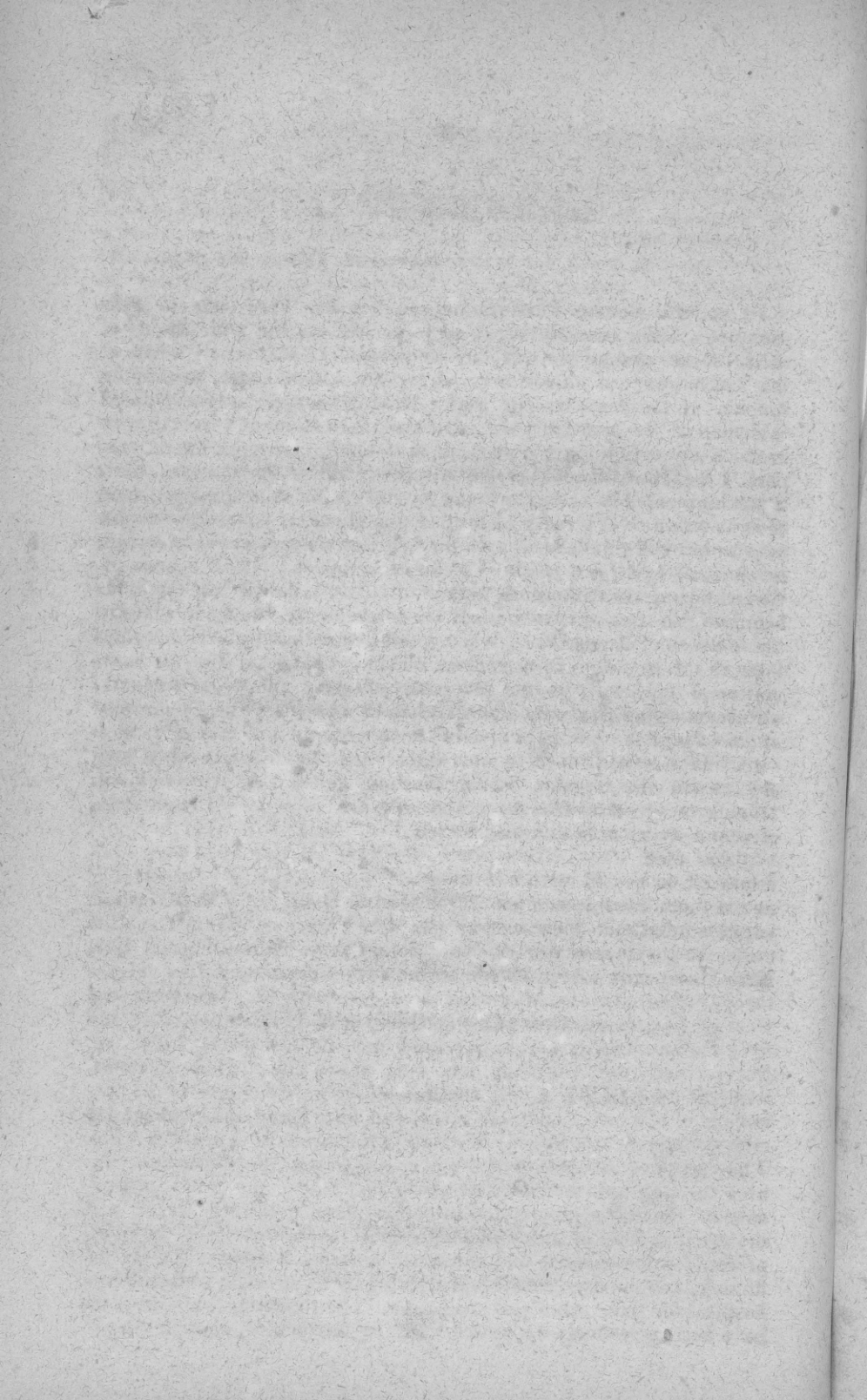
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NATCHEZ, *March 28, 1822.*

DEAR SIR: Samuel Postlethait, esquire, has been so good as to shew me a letter recently received from you, stating your doubts of the ultimate passage of an act for the purpose of validating a law of the Legislature of this State, laying a tax upon boats, &c. for the support of the Natchez Hospital. Having been recently appointed chairman of the board of trustees of this institution, and feeling very anxious that something should be done to obtain a revenue for its support, I beg leave to address to you some facts and observations, that, if communicated to Congress, may possibly have some influence upon their decision. The early history of this Hospital you are, no doubt, acquainted with; and, also, with the fact that no permanent or certain revenue has ever been established for its support. The expense incurred during the calamitous autumn of 1819, exhausted all the funds belonging to it; and it remained, in consequence, unoccupied until the fifteenth of August last; when a small sum having been accumulated in the treasury, from various incidental sources, and an association of the faculty having generously offered to afford, gratuitously, all necessary medical attendance; also, to superintend its general administration; it was again opened for the reception of *poor sick strangers*. It was continued in operation until the fifteenth of February, when the treasury having become exhausted, it was closed. During these six months there were admitted 139 patients, of whom were cured and discharged 117
do died - - - 14
remained on the fifteenth February - - - 8

five of those have been since cured and discharged. Of the whole number admitted, there were, from New York ten, South Carolina three, Pennsylvania fifteen, New Jersey four, Massachusetts four, New Hampshire three, Rhode Island one, Connecticut two, Maine three, Virginia twelve, Maryland three, Kentucky six, Tennessee one, Georgia one, North Carolina one, Ohio eight, Indiana one, England five, Ireland twenty-seven, Scotland four, France three, Italy one, Switzerland one, Germany ten, born at sea one. Those persons, with the exception of a very small number, were engaged in the operations of commerce upon the river; and were found, in and about our city, poor, sick, and entirely destitute of the means of support or relief. The extensive navigation of the Mississippi and its tributaries, running through nine or ten states above us, render the influx of persons of the above description into this place, peculiarly great; and the great number of them who suffer from the insalubrity of the river, present, in the summer and autumnal seasons, a spectacle truly afflicting, and imposes the strongest necessity of having a well endowed hospital for their relief and protection. The inhabitants of this place have been grievously oppressed with the burthen of contributing to

the relief of so many objects of distress; and we think that justice as well as humanity requires that others should contribute something towards the support of an institution calculated to be so extensively effective in relieving the distresses of that useful and necessary class of men who carry on the commerce of the Mississippi. The hospital edifice is well adapted to its purpose; its entire management, as well as the best and most assiduous medical attendance, will always be performed gratuitously; its interior economy has been conducted with a skill and attention not inferior to any similar institution in the United States. The patients were furnished with every thing necessary for their comfort and relief; and the frugality of expenditure may be judged of by the fact that the whole expense did not, at any time during the period above stated, exceed *thirty-seven and a half cents* per day for each patient. Congress have, long since, in their wisdom, provided for the endowment of hospitals for the relief of persons engaged in commercial pursuits, particularly in several of the seaports. But truly there is no place in the Union where it is more necessary than at Natchez. A citizen who performs a voyage of two or three thousand miles upon our inland waters, and subjects himself to the horrors of shipwreck, poverty, and disease, far from his home and his friends, is surely as much entitled to the charitable provision of Congress, as the mariner who makes his voyage upon the ocean. The amount requisite to maintain this hospital is small indeed; a trifling tax upon *boats*, or the wages of the hands who navigate them, and a mite contributed by each of the states, whose citizens navigate the Mississippi, would afford us ample means to extend relief to as many poor, sick strangers as would probably require it. I beg, sir, you will excuse the liberty I have taken to express what I have done upon this subject; but I know that no man more warmly feels the interest of the sacred cause of humanity than you do; and I feel confident that it is only necessary to inform you of facts, such as the above, to induce you to zealously press upon Congress the imperious necessity of doing something upon this subject.

Dear sir, please accept my most earnest wishes for your good health and happiness.

Most respectfully,

Your humble servant,

A. PERLEE, M. D.

DAVID HOLMES, Esq.